



Programme Specification

Please note that this specification is subject to change, in line with the national guidance on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. General information

Awarding institution:	Royal College of Art
Programme title:	MA Design Products
Award:	Masters
Qualification framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Design
Programme duration:	2-years
Total UK credits:	240 credits
Mode of study:	Full time
Date valid from/to:	2020-21

2. Programme Philosophy

Design Products encourages students to be creative, innovative design thinkers supporting them on the journey to develop their own design identities. The programme embraces a pluralistic approach to design across a number of design cultures, through which students develop their design identity. These cultures represent current and future discourse within the discipline, through making and experimentation, design for manufacture, designing interactions, and by using design as a catalyst for change or a means to explore emergent scenarios. The programme enables students to conceptualise and validate ideas by canvassing, provoking, challenging, and questioning people, places, technology, things and systems.

Design Products educates students to be design-thinkers who can address real world challenges through balancing high levels of creativity and technical capability with contextual insight and empathy for people, as well as understanding and shaping contemporary and future discourse. Through team and individual projects, and through engaging with external partners, students develop their own design culture whilst building a portfolio of work that will locate them in their desired professional context. Graduates are creative catalysts and visionaries, who go on to lead in design consultancies, join large established companies, and to set-up their own design studios and start-ups. Our graduates are:

- Designers of the future
- Driven by their vision
- Capable of tackling and redefining industries
- Change makers
- Thought leaders

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme Aims

The Design Products programme aims to provide an environment for learning where students can develop their abilities in depth. Successful students will be able to demonstrate:

- Independent motivation, willingness and ability to produce high quality design work in response to an intelligent, articulate brief or through creation of their own briefs.
- Comprehensive understanding of the techniques applicable and the technical knowledge and practical skills appropriate to their design approach.
- Knowledge of the historical, social and cultural context of design and conceptual understanding sufficient to enable critical evaluation of design in contemporary context.
- The ability to form an objective view of their work in the context of contemporary practice and critical discourse.

What will I be expected to achieve?

In addition, it is expected that successful students will have transferable skills appropriate to employment or practice:

- The exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- Decision making in complex and unpredictable situations
- Independent learning ability necessary for continuing professional

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

Able to:	A. Intellectual Engagement
A1.	Develop innovative ideas and proposals that challenge your understanding of your practice and discipline in the context of <i>design products</i>
A2.	Engage in intellectual and creative research in order to develop an awareness of functional, aesthetic, commercial and critical perspectives.
A3.	Identify how your work is positioned within a larger context demonstrating knowledge of current relevant discourses.
A4.	Demonstrate understanding of the social, ethical and economic impact of your design.
A5.	Bring a design perspective to contemporary debate on technology, consumerism, economics, people and society.

Able to:	B. Technical Skills
B1.	Produce work at an advanced level that demonstrates intellectual thought, creativity and technique.
B2.	Develop, validate and evaluate design ideas through appropriate prototyping methods, demonstrating feasibility of concepts through engagement with relevant stakeholders or other appropriate means.

B3.	Identify, exploit and create the aesthetic and functional possibilities of different materials, processes and technologies.
B4.	Demonstrate an understanding of different production techniques, processes and systems.
B5.	Present your designs using the appropriate visual, organisational and auditory tools.
Able to:	C. Professional Development
C1.	Develop an individual design approach appropriate to the client industry in which you practice.
C2.	Take responsibility for developing project briefs and managing time and resources effectively.
C3.	Demonstrate the ability to work effectively in a team to assign roles, delegate tasks and communicate the outcomes of a group project.
C4.	Identify when and how to access outside expertise in realising your design ambitions and manage ongoing relationships with collaborators.
C5.	Presenting work engagingly, in ways that are appropriate to your audience.

4. What will I learn?

The MA programme provides students who have already acquired knowledge and skills in various areas of design with an academic framework in which to continue to develop their own professional direction. The programme supports the students in gaining independence, developing their design identity and to tackle problems with increasingly level of uncertainty and ambiguity as they progress. The programme takes a pluralistic view of the students' ideas and interests and encourages experimental, ground breaking work, encouraging a critical approach and a questioning of accepted practices to address real world problems, develop new innovative and global challenges.

The MA programme builds briefs, projects and opportunities that aid students to encompass their visions as they are student led, underpinned by world leading experts. Students develop their specialisms with input through tutorials, workshops, lectures, seminars and peer led opportunities. This is underpinned with principles, tools and techniques, that are relevant to the current or future practice of design, for example, design research methods, systems thinking, advanced ideation techniques, visualisation and prototyping in physical and digital environments and; issues of design for sustainability, the circular economy and commercial viability. The School of Design has created a unique environment for interdisciplinary design led innovation. It attracts students from a highly diverse set of global disciplines, experience and industries. This provides the opportunity to not only reshape their own design practice, but to reshape the discipline of design itself.

The Design Products programme consists of five programme-specific units that provide the core learning, these units are complemented by the cross-School unit addressing a Grand

Challenge, and a College-wide unit, Critical and Historical Studies, culminating in a dissertation where students are encouraged to research their design interests to inform their future projects. The cross-School programme fosters collaboration and interdisciplinary skills, providing an opportunity to network and work closely across different disciplines within the school.

The progression of the units is designed to increase the level of ambiguity and uncertainty of the projects as we move from the first year (Unit 1 and Unit 2), to supporting the students in developing their emerging specialisms (Unit 3 and Unit 4) in the second year, and an increasing level of independence leading to the final unit (Unit 5), the student final self-directed project. Second year students are expected to produce a minimum of two graduation projects, or one large graduation project.

The units are led by a world leading cross-disciplinary tutors, visiting tutors, visiting professors, practicing designers, research professionals and experts in their fields and are supported by the Head of Programme.

The Programme consists of 2 Pathways:

1. Design Products Pathway, as described above.

2. Design Futures pathway consists of 60 credits which are pathway-specific, and with the possibility to continue into the independent final project. Students will be challenged to provoke and design discourses for significant future issues, be they technological, social, cultural, political, economic or environmental, expecting to lead to new interactions, experiences, products and systems. These will run in parallel to (and integrated partially) with Dream team and Express yourself (Year 2), thus enabling students to apply the futures vision across the multitude of DP design cultures.

Unit 1 (20 Credits)

Unit 2 (40 Credits)

Unit 3 (20 Credits)

Unit 4 (40 Credits)

Unit 5 (60 Credits)

Design Futures Pathway Units:

Working at Scale (20 credits) in place of Dream Team (20 credits)

Future Discourse (40 credits) in place of Express Yourself (40 credits)

College wide Unit (20 credits)

CHS (40 credits)

Critical and Historical Studies

Critical & Historical Studies is the cross-College platform that delivers teaching and activities aimed at enabling critical engagement to take place within, and between, the different disciplines at the RCA.

All studio-based first year MA students have a CHS unit as a core part of their programme of study, designed to enable this critical dialogue and enhance each student's development. Led by a team of dedicated, highly skilled and deeply engaged staff, CHS delivers a programme of lectures, seminars, workshops and tutorials (both small group and one-to-one). Students will be encouraged

to engage with vital and challenging ideas that relate to their practices. This both enriches and provides a broader intellectual framework within which to establish a coherent inter-relationship between theoretical and practice-based approaches to art and design.

As a team, our disciplinary interests span the fine and applied arts, architecture, design (including fashion, graphics, interior and product design), craft, communication, film, humanities, photography, digital media, science and technology.

CHS provides:

- contemporary, thought-provoking lectures by CHS staff and visiting tutors
- the opportunity for students to explore the theoretical background of their chosen discipline through a taught dissertation process
- individual and group tutorial support from our Programme's team of expert tutors

The CHS Handbook sets out the broad principles of CHS at the RCA. It outlines what you can expect of us and what we require of you to engage and produce work to your best ability. On the Moodle pages you will find details of the scheduled programme and the broad areas to be covered in each term, details about the tuition and assessment of your CHS dissertation, and information on resources that will help you during your studies.

Your main points of contact for CHS will be your group tutor and your School Liaison Tutor for your School. You will be assigned your group tutor at start of the Autumn Term.

Curriculum Map

Year 1

Unit 1 The Deep End (20 Credits)	Grand Challenge (20 credits)	Unit 2 In Reality (40 credits)	Portfolio Crits
Critical & Historical Studies		Critical & Historical Studies (40 credits)	

Year 2

Unit 3 Dream Team (20 credits)	Unit 4 Express Yourself (40 credits)	Unit 5 Launch Pad (60 credits)	Graduate Show
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5. How will I learn?

Please note that these are subject to change, in line with the national guidance on the Covid-19 response.

Projects

Design projects are the core learning element of the MA programme around which tutorials, workshops, crits, group debates, seminars and technical instruction take place. These projects are led by students' visions, and thus require highly motivated, engaged students. Projects will vary in length and format according to the structure of units. The content will explore a range of issues related to underpinning design approaches and principles of the programme. Projects may be carried out with commercial and industrial organisations, offering their time, expertise or financial support. Outputs range from the artisanal to the industrialist, the artefact centric to behaviour change systems. The Design Products programme instils different design approaches, for example and not limited to:

- **Maker // 'Design Through Making'**, Making and experimentation is central to the discovery of new possibilities, through materials, process, techniques, technologies, cultures or locations.
- **Industrial Designer // 'Design for Manufacture'** seeks to explore mass cultural, aesthetic and utilitarian desires. Manufacturing technologies deliver products at different volumes, but also, dependant on appropriate contexts and materials. This embodies traditional high-volume manufacturing models alongside emergent opportunities of mass-customisation, digital fabrication, through to material science.
- **Interactive Designer // 'Object Mediated Interactions'** explores a broad range of interactive objects, from consumer electronics to the "Internet of Things", exhibition design and installations. There is a strong focus on enabling technologies, the experience of interaction and new opportunities for outputs.
- **Change maker // 'Design as Catalyst'**, things are inherently political, from the mass-produced goods that fill our shelves to bespoke custom designs and objects created for exhibitions. They express the politics, economics, opinions, aspirations, values, viewpoints and society of those that commission them, design them, manufacture them and use them. Design is an agitator, instigator and agent of change.
- **Visionary // Exploring Emerging Scenarios, Manifesting the ideas and theories of others** as well as developing their own, through experimentation, prototyping, possible products and object-oriented narratives. It uses speculation and what-if scenarios to imagine and set forth multi-scalar and multi-temporal design interventions, with a focus on designing for preferred scenarios.

Underpinning all the approaches of the different design practices are a set of design principles, these are integrated in numerous stages of projects, for example:

- **Designing things better //** From the extraction of virgin resources, the processing of materials, the transportation of goods and the inevitable end of a product's useful life there can be significant negative consequences to a wide range of ecosystems. This principle attempts to tackle the challenge of making things better through design for disassembly, design for repair, design of more meaningful products, the selection or creation of better materials, the creation of systems that keep hold of valuable materials

for future generations or points of intervention that respond to mitigation rather than consequence.

- **New notions & actions from new technology** // Questioning and exploring new applications of current technology as well as developing rich and engaging visions of future technological products. This principle embraces the new by pushing beyond the imagined future to one that can be designed. Outcomes can be at all scales from a singular specific context or global application.
- **Networked design** // Whether engaged in communities on a local level or in an international movement, designers within networks are playing an ever-increasing role in the design and development of the made world. This principle explores new links between producer and consumer, opportunities for custom product creation at all scales of manufacture, intelligent and networked objects, the potential for ad hoc networks to create and develop products.
- **The making of things** // This principle is concerned with the information, processes, methods, materials, tools and spaces that can be used to make physical products. Key to this is learning through experimentation, making things to make things, understanding the properties and meaning of materials while pushing the potential of manufacturing processes or the creation of new ways of making. Where workshop access is limited, students will be encouraged to create their own prototyping resources where practical, liaise with local makerspaces &/or outsource.
- **Human culture** // The relationships people have with objects can be very complex as objects can speak to us of culture, status, gender, class, location, ability, capability and personal identity. This theme is focused on understanding people, their needs, desires and aspirations. As well as the context that products operate in and the significance and value they hold.
- **Design for Enterprise** // Enterprise is about creating value, creating employment and economics. The process of value creation can embody funded opportunities, pitching, crowdfunding, intellectual property, business creation or experiential value that hold financial gain.

Cross cutting elements within the programme will include:

- **Workshops** (to prototype / represent industrial processes).
- **Interaction prototyping** (physical computing, Arduino, Raspberry Pi, coding, html, electronics, etc.).
- **Design process methods** (structuring a project or challenge & write a brief; to articulate personal design process).
- **Critical thinking methods** (generating a range of design ideas that span multiple scenarios as well as developing an understanding of how others perceive your work).
- **User-engagement methods** (to learn how to work with people to generate & test ideas)
- **Research methods** (understanding the difference between formal and informal research. Tools and techniques of investigation, analysis and synthesis).

- **Design communication methods** (developing an understand how a design is perceived or read as well as learning to use a variety of presentation methods / media).

Lectures

Experts' Talks

The programme runs a series of practice-related lectures and illustrated talks by visiting lecturers and staff members. In recent years the lecturers have included Sam Hecht/Industry Facility, Jim Reeves/Therefore, Joep van Lisehout, Tim Parsons, John Small (Fosters & Partners), Arash & Kelly and Russell Pinch, Sydney Levinson (Rhodes & Rhodes) and Louise-Anne Comeau. Alastair Parvin Wikihouse, Ellen Macarthur foundation, industry organisations including IDEO, Microsoft and many others.

Lectures on other Programmes

Students are encouraged to attend lectures organised by other programmes, where these are offered.

Design in Business

Lectures covering aspects of professional practice and talks by recent graduates about life after College is offered during the second term.

Design Competitions

There are a large number of competitions available to students both within and outside the College and where appropriate these may become the subject of project briefs. Students should discuss and agree with their tutors any such projects before they start and are advised not to take on any additional work that could be considered detrimental to their studies.

Instruction Courses

Basic Electronics and Engineering for Designers

These will provide a basic introduction on how these are integrated into design and support for project work

Computer Software

Introductions to 3D modelling, Rhino, AutoDesk 360 and SolidWorks will be provided.

You may get the opportunity to participate in an exhibition of your student work, either during or at the conclusion of your studies. Your Programme Handbook should provide more information on the nature of this participation

6. Assessment and feedback

Unit assessment

First Year Assessment

Each student will be assessed after each unit against the learning outcomes, leading to summative assessments, and ensuring that students have the opportunity for feedback moving from one project to the next.

At the end of the year, a formal panel will review each student's work to evaluate progress part way through his or her studies, and determines progression to the second year. The interim assessment review is conducted with a board consisting of relevant staff, where students are

not present, reviewing the student's summative assessment of the year. Students are required to pass all units, including CHS, in order to progress to year 2.

Assessment outcomes are submitted to the Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline, with the recommendation that a student does or does not progress.

Final Examination

The Final Examination is the culmination of a MA degree. It is held in the summer term of students' second year. The final independent project together with the body of work showing the progression of the student's work exemplifying the learning journey throughout the programme, will be assessed during the exam by a panel of academics.

The Final Examination is in two parts:

- a) A Viva-Voce, which takes place in the final term of a programme of study
- b) A School Examination Board, will be held to recommend results to the Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline for ratification.

If at Final Examination a student's work from the exam or assessed work from earlier units is considered to be a borderline fail (under 30 units, or 30-40 units at exams board discretion), the student may be required to retrieve the work within an academic term, or at a referral examination within 12 months. For more information, please see the RCA Regulations.

Information regarding individual assessments will be included in the Unit Descriptors, and will be available to students at the beginning of the academic year.

7. What award can I get?

To be awarded an RCA MA degree you need to gain 240 credits at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will involve successfully completing all units.

If you fail a unit at the first attempt, you will be offered an opportunity to resit the unit. If you are successful you will be awarded the credits for that unit. If you are unsuccessful, you cannot progress further in your programme.

Exit awards:

If you have gained at least 120 credits at level 7 of the FHEQ, you may be eligible for the exit award of Postgraduate Diploma. An exit award is a final award from the College and cannot be rescinded.

For more detailed information about the College's assessment, progression and awards policies see the Regulations.

8. Admissions

Cross-College requirements

Academic Entry Requirements

Candidates must normally have obtained a good relevant undergraduate degree or an equivalent qualification. The College recognises as an equivalent qualification any degree, diploma, certificate or other evidence of formal qualification awarded by a university or other higher education

establishment where the award is made following the successful completion of a course of at least three years' study, the programme of study being open, as a general rule, only to persons holding a certificate awarded on the successful completion of a full course of upper secondary education.

Other qualifications may be approved, providing that the College's Academic Board for Concessions and Discipline (ABCD) is satisfied that the applicant has the ability to pursue the programme of study successfully. The ABCD is empowered to make judgements about the extent to which qualifications or experience gained elsewhere may be accepted in partial fulfilment of its requirements.

Portfolio

All applicants are required to submit a portfolio as part of the application process. A portfolio is a showcase of an applicant's work as an artist or designer and can be made up of images, videos or writing examples. The portfolio helps us to better understand the applicant and allows them to show evidence of their ability and motivation to undertake a given programme.

Each programme is looking for different things in a portfolio; each Head of Programme provides specific advice on portfolio requirements in the online application system. We advise prospective students to consider these requirements carefully before submitting their application.

Applicant Qualities

Generally, we are looking for applicants to demonstrate their:

- creativity, imagination and innovation;
- ability to articulate the intentions of the work;
- intellectual engagement in areas relevant to the work;
- technical skills appropriate to the work;
- potential to benefit from the programme and achieve MA standards overall.

English Language

Applicants who are not a national of a majority English-speaking country will need to demonstrate their English language proficiency. The College accepts a range of English language qualifications. The full list can be seen at <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/entrance-requirements/english-language-requirements/>

Applicants are exempt from this requirement if they have received a 2.1 degree or above from a university in a majority English-speaking nation within the last two years.

If a student would need a Tier 4 visa to study at the RCA, they will also need to meet the Home Office's minimum requirements for entry clearance.

Admission Process

Applications must be made directly to the College through our online application portal: <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/application-process/ma-application-process/>

Upon completion of that first stage of the application process, candidates will be invited to submit a portfolio of their work, a 300-word statement of intent and a video communicating clearly their motivations, personal interests and why they are pursuing a Masters degree at the Royal College of Art. These materials are reviewed by members of the programme team who will communicate an academic decision to the College Registry, who manage the process of offer-making in line with the College's recruitment targets. In some cases, where the programme team is not able to make an

admission decision based solely upon the work submitted by the applicant, we may invite the candidate to undertake an interview with us.

Applications are considered chronologically by date and time of final portfolio submission. Whilst a programme still has vacancies, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. Once a programme becomes full, subsequent successful applicants will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available for them.

Programme-Specific requirements

Specific advice on programme portfolio requirements is provided by the Head of Programme in the online application system. Please consult the College website for further information on programme-specific admission and portfolio requirements:

<https://www.rca.ac.uk/study/programme-finder/design-products-ma/#requirements>